

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In February, Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) officially requested that the U.S. Department of Agriculture develop a partnership with government agencies to evaluate health effects of aerial spraying for the light brown apple moth. On Tuesday, the USDA responded in a letter that the Surgeon General and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention are deferring their health oversight role to the Environmental Protection Agency.

"I respect the work that the USDA is doing to make sure the moth eradication process is a safe one, but I am disappointed they were unable to bring key agencies to the table to ensure that the process is not a risk to human health," Rep. Farr said. "By bucking the issue to the EPA, the Surgeon General and the CDC are ignoring the very real concerns of many California families that the aerial spraying poses a health risk."

In their letter, the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service did promise an additional environmental assessment of potential toxicity. The letter stated: "EPA will review the results of the additional testing and will assess any potential toxicity of the inert ingredients based upon oral, dermal, and inhalation toxicity; potential skin and eye irritation; and potential skin sensitization."

"I applaud the USDA's efforts to test these substances and inform the public of their effects," Rep. Farr said. "Keeping our families safe during any eradication is my number one concern. I support getting rid of this moth, but not at the expense of our health."

Rep. Farr plans to follow up with the EPA on both the environmental assessment and the health effects of the spraying. He is currently drafting a letter to Stephen Johnson, administrator for the EPA, and will be following up with a meeting request.

The Congressman is still awaiting answers to questions posed to the USDA following a March hearing. Those questions were related to how and when the moth was declared a dangerous pest and how that designation may be changed.

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